

Congressman Childers Leads First District Crop Disaster Tour with USDA Official

December 14, 2009

Washington, DC – Today, Congressman Travis Childers (MS-01) led a crop disaster tour throughout Mississippi's First Congressional District to show the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) the severity of this year's crop losses due to excessive rainfall, as well as the level of assistance hard-hit counties need in order to recover. Joining Childers for the entirety of the tour was USDA Deputy Under Secretary Michael Scuse.

"Producers throughout North Mississippi are suffering enormous profit losses and local economies are struggling to stay afloat due to heavy rains that have left farmers unable to harvest up to 50 percent of their crops," said Congressman Childers. "In order to ensure our hard-hit counties receive the relief they need, it's critical that the USDA, the organization responsible for providing disaster assistance, has a first-hand understanding of the severity of our farmers' losses. I thank Deputy Under Secretary Scuse for taking the time to tour our district for this very important purpose. I will continue working to enact disaster assistance legislation and to make sure our farmers and communities are able to make a full recovery."

Today's tour included a forum with farmers in Verona held in conjunction with Mississippi State University (MSU), a meeting with the Vardaman Sweet Potato Council, and a meeting with farmers in Batesville held in conjunction with the Mississippi Farm Bureau.

Agriculture economists at MSU estimate that state crop losses are nearing \$485 million, exceeding 30 percent of the state's overall crop value. Based on crop reports, MSU noted that nearly 64 percent of the state's sweet potatoes, 50 percent of cotton, 44 percent of soybeans,

and 41 percent of grain sorghum will also be lost this year.

Last week, Congressman Childers joined Representative Marion Berry (AR-01) in introducing legislation to provide timely disaster assistance. The legislation includes direct payment assistance to program crops, \$650 million in state grants to assist specialty crop producers, and \$150 million in assistance for livestock producers. Companion legislation has already been introduced in the Senate.

In November, 79 of Mississippi's 82 counties – including all 24 counties in the First District – were granted primary disaster designations. These designations followed letters sent by Congressman Childers urging USDA Secretary Vilsack and Governor Barbour to act quickly in gathering the information necessary to provide these counties with assistance.

A pro-gun, pro-life Mississippian, Congressman Travis Childers (D-MS) represents the First Congressional District in North Mississippi. He is a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition and serves on the House Agriculture and Financial Services Committee. Congressman Childers co-chairs the reestablished bipartisan Congressional Rural Caucus and was appointed to the bipartisan Second Amendment Task Force. For more information, visit www.childers.house.gov

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